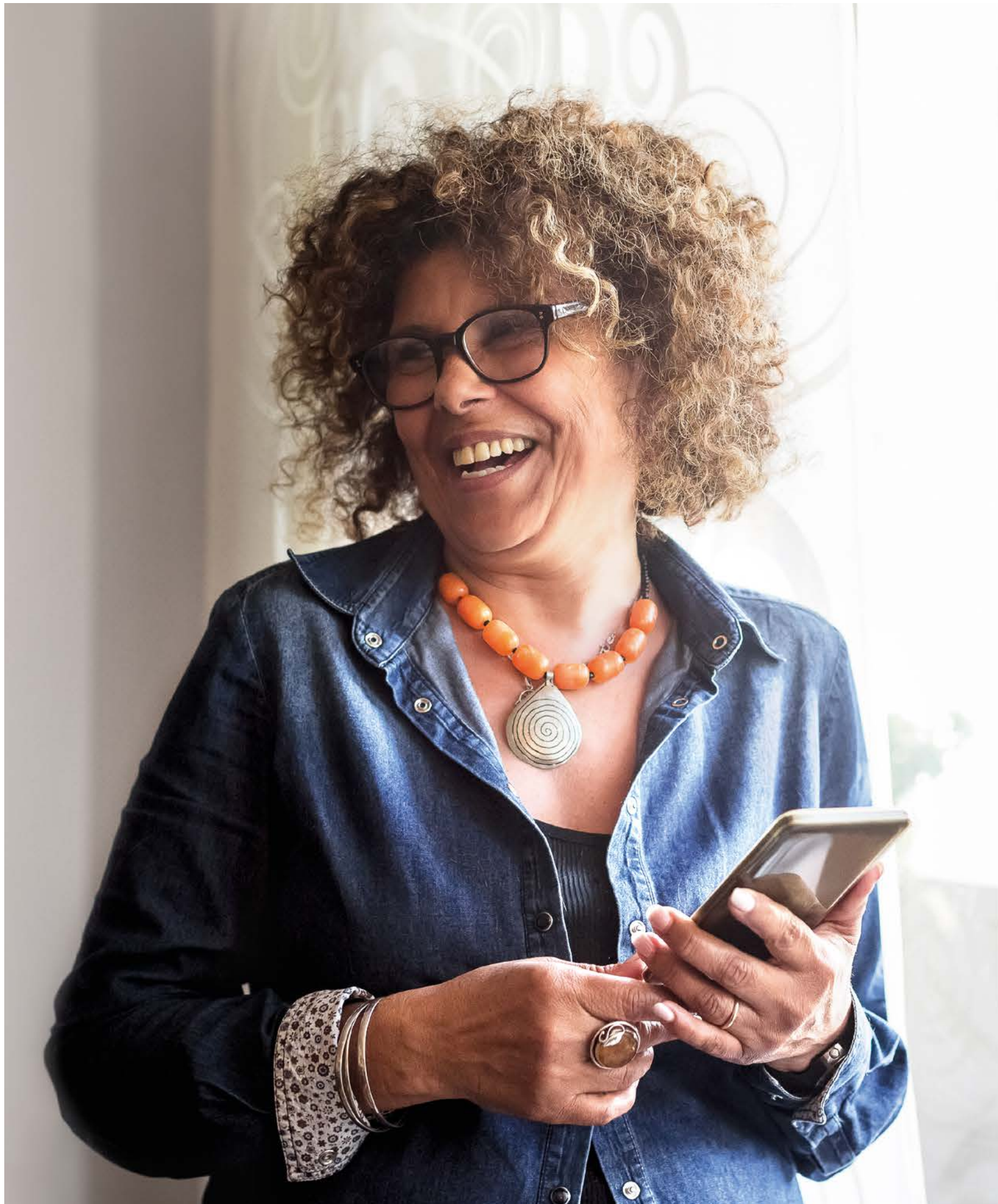


Five reasons why going digital is good for your learners





Before 2020, a digital revolution was happening across every industry; but following the effects that the pandemic COVID-19 has had on businesses, it can be said that this digital revolution has accelerated. With many businesses now working from home, a flexible working structure being called for, and less face-to-face contact between colleagues and peers, digital work practices have now become a necessity.

But converting to digital has often been perceived as time-consuming, costly and irrelevant. And though businesses are now recognising it is very much relevant, it is still a daunting prospect.

We spoke to our Operations Director of Virtual College Apprenticeships, Melanie Thompson, to understand what the benefits of digital transformation are for your learners and their future success.

1.

Digital transformation is now a need rather than a want

'Digital technologies are fundamentally changing society,' says Melanie, 'and increasingly there isn't really a choice for businesses about going digital – you either do it or you fail.'

Individual employees may have multiple careers, rather than just one, and it's important for employers to respond to that. 'You'll have people coming in straight from school or from twenty years in another job, and they all need to be able to work digitally,' adds Melanie. 'Your organisation needs to be prepared to give them those skills, as well as having a culture of using digital tools to work effectively.'

2.

Digital skills benefit everyone

'It doesn't matter how old your learners are, or how often they use technology – in the future, they will all need some digital skills to be able to work in any industry,' Melanie says. New technologies have disrupted how people learn, making traditional learning styles redundant and opening up new possibilities of multi-media, peer-to-peer and self-directed learning. Melanie notes, 'By equipping your employees with digital skills, you're preparing your business for future success; the requirement for these abilities is only going to increase, whether that's hosting video conferencing calls or managing automated manufacturing.'

3.

Digital delivery appeals to learners

'Particularly for apprentices,' explains Melanie, 'digital delivery of learning materials can be very appealing.' She identifies that apprentices have often gone into their preferred career path because they didn't enjoy elements of how they learnt at school, such as sitting in a classroom or not having control over their learning. 'Our apprenticeship programmes are delivered 80% online,' says Melanie, 'which is a refreshing change for apprentices; they're able to direct their learning more and not have to struggle to pay attention in a stuffy classroom.'



4.

Digital learning can help overcome learning challenges

Melanie highlights digital delivery as an important way to help learners overcome their personal learning difficulties. 'One of the key benefits of learning and being assessed online is learners feel less 'exposed' when it comes to asking questions, presenting reports or discussing ideas.' Whether it's shyness, a specific behavioural issue or an aversion to public speaking, e-learning can boost a learner's confidence in soft skills as they can practice online before trying them out in 'real life'. 'Plus, the apprenticeship end point assessment is now an online, remote interview so digital delivery prepares them for that very well,' says Melanie.

5.

Digital delivery complements face-to-face learning

'The assumption is that digital learning will isolate individuals,' says Melanie, 'and that it has to be an 'all or nothing' approach. The truth is online learning and face-to-face training work well together.' In an apprenticeship with a high percentage of online delivery, apprentices can share expertise with others from different industries and still take part in peer-to-peer learning. Virtual College uses four key elements – context, construction, collaboration and conversation – to build its apprenticeship programmes. Melanie explains, 'Of these, collaboration and conversation are sometimes the most exciting for organisations, as it transforms apprentices from being the 'junior' ones in the workforce to genuine team members.'

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